



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Governor Tony Evers / Secretary Kevin A. Carr

Waupun Correctional Central Generating Plant (CGP): Background on elevated Radium levels in wells 3 & 4

When was the Department of Corrections notified of the elevated radium levels in one of its wells?

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) notified the Department of Corrections on January 2, 2020 and DOC leaders immediately began working with the DNR and the Department of Administration (DOA) to start the remediation and notification processes.

The DNR determined there was not an immediate health risk; otherwise, the notification process to the DOC and to affected facilities would have been immediate.

Which Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities utilize the CGP?

- Waupun Correctional Institution (WCI)
- John Burke Correctional Center (JBCC)
- Dodge Correctional Institution (DCI)
- The Waupun Dairy (operated by the DOC)

When did the DNR collect the water samples at the CGP?

Water samples are collected quarterly. It was not until the December 2019 sample was analyzed by the DNR that the running annual average of the samples indicated the presence of combined radium slightly exceeding the standard Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL). The levels of radium can fluctuate within the year. From 2021-2022, the radium level was under the standard MCL average.

What is the Department of Corrections doing to address the elevated levels in one of the wells?

To remediate the radium levels within the drinking water of the CGP, the DOC has assessed a variety of options and determined the most effective way to remediate is to construct improvements on the existing CGP water system. These improvements will address the filtration and treatment of water from the well, any potential water storage issues, and update certain water distribution systems from facilities.

This improvement project must follow the required state building and construction processes. The DOC is actively working with DOA to streamline these processes wherever possible. As of June 2023, the estimated project timeline is outlined below:

Estimated Timeframe	Activity/benchmark
Early Spring 2020	Architect/Engineer selection process complete
Fall/Winter 2021	Project design report completed
Summer 2022	Wisconsin Building Commission approval then required to proceed
Spring 2023	The state-mandatory process begins to collect bids from construction firms .
May 2023	Contractor received Notice to Proceed
Summer 2023	Construction firm to be selected and construction begins
Fall/Winter 2024	Project to be completed

What are the health risks of radium in drinking water?

The DNR has determined that the drinking water at the affected facilities does not pose an immediate health risk, and the facilities DO NOT need to use alternative water supplies.

The National Academy of Sciences has concluded that long-term exposure to elevated levels of radium in drinking water may result in an increased risk of bone cancer.

What is radium?

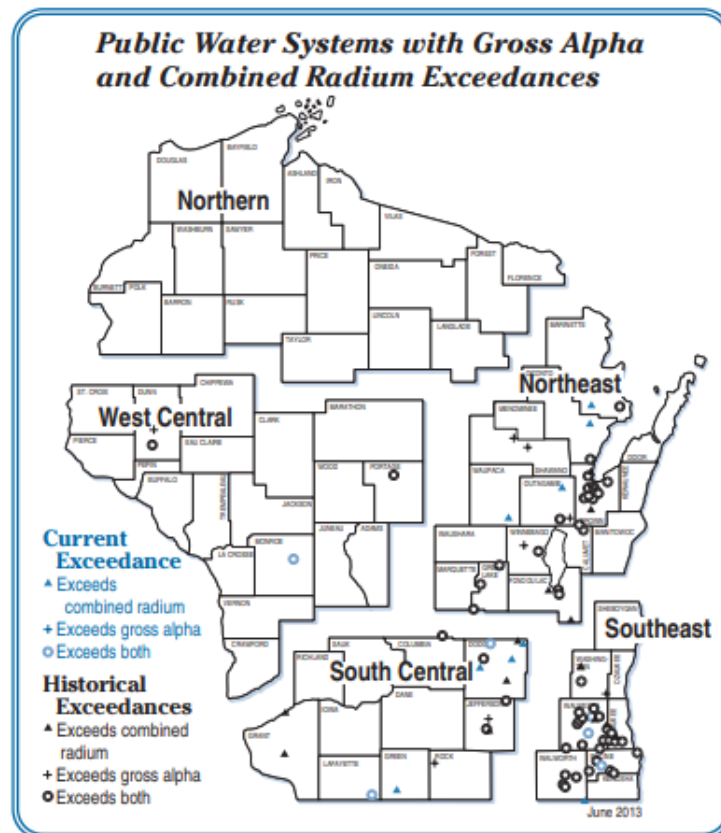
Radium is a naturally occurring element contained in many rock formations throughout Wisconsin. Radium cannot be seen, smelled or tasted in the water.

How does radium enter a water supply?

Groundwater moves slowly through the pores and cracks in underground layers of unconsolidated material and rock called aquifers. As it moves through the aquifer, minerals and other elements, including radium, can be dissolved out of the rock into the groundwater. Some rock more effectively transfers radium into groundwater than others. Eventually, the water can be drawn into nearby drinking water wells as the water is extracted.

Are other communities facing increased radium in well water?

Communities throughout Wisconsin are working to address elevated radium levels in well water.



Source: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

I have a private well and live near the affected facilities. How can I test my well water?

The DNR provides a number of resources for individuals who are interested in getting their well water tested:

<https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/wells/privatewelltest.html>